

Holmes



ENGINEERING A MODERN DIGITAL WORKSPACE FOR HOLMES GROUP

Founded in New Zealand nearly six decades ago, Holmes Group leads the way in innovative, high quality engineering and design.

Creative design experts and problem solvers, Holmes Group helps clients and partners bring their visions to life. With over 450 employees, Holmes Group delivers kiwi-grown engineering expertise around the world, with offices in USA, Asia, Australia, Europe and the Middle East.

Holmes Group is responsible for delivering ICT strategically across their five subsidiaries:

Holmes Consulting: Engineering and Design
New Zealand and Pacific Rim

Holmes Structures: Structural Engineering Consultancy
San Francisco and Los Angeles

Holmes Fire: Fire Protection Engineering
New Zealand, Australia and USA

Holmes Solutions: Scientific Product Testing and Development
New Zealand and USA

Holmes Farsight: Regulatory Guidance Services
New Zealand

Each of Holmes Groups subsidiaries are independent, experts in their fields, yet work together under Holmes Group as an integrated whole.

The situation

Across Holmes Group, there was little collaboration between the five subsidiary companies. Having experienced significant growth, the Holmes Group of companies each had a huge volume of information, yet they couldn't easily access or share it. With each group working in silos, the lack of collaboration in the business was becoming a serious issue, affecting productivity and employee satisfaction.

With additional challenges around compliance, availability and mobility, Holmes Group was in dire need of a collaboration solution that would meet their business needs.

OVERVIEW

The need

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The solution

Partner and trusted advisor to Holmes Group, in late 2017 Lexel deployed Microsoft SharePoint online modern experience with the SharePoint framework (SPfx), integrating Microsoft Teams.

The benefit

Holmes Central was launched in December 2017, delivering a collaborative space for the entire Holmes Group. The solution incorporated both Microsoft SharePoint online modern experience and Microsoft Teams.

ICT Project Lead Sebastian Hermann comments, 'Holmes Central is the one place employees can now go to, for literally anything they need, whether they're in New Zealand or on the other side of the world.'

ICT Project Lead, Sebastian Hermann explains, 'It's like we were all playing in our own bedrooms, and occasionally we'd pop into the lounge and chat together. The idea was that we'd bring people into the living room more and create a more functional family.'

By early 2017, Holmes Group had formalised their Digital strategy. Already using Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft SharePoint online was chosen to be the foundation of "Community and Collaboration" within the group; critical to business transformation moving forward.

CIO Sam Mulholland tells us 'With so many areas of expertise within Holmes Group, it was about building a place that we could share resource, information and ideas easily across the entire group, as well as with our external partners. One of the reasons we chose SharePoint Online is because it's a platform that's deeply integrated into Microsoft Office 365, which is a core piece of our existing business efficiency.'

In July of 2017, Holmes Group commenced their highly anticipated Microsoft SharePoint online project with an offshore provider. The journey wasn't going to be an easy one. Unfortunately the partner fell well short of expectations. Initially appearing to be a cost-effective solution, in twelve weeks nothing had been delivered.

With internal timeframes already committed to, Holmes Group disengaged with the original provider, disillusioned and frustrated.

The Solution

Earlier in 2017, Lexel had successfully delivered two 'Microsoft Planning Services' engagements in Holmes Group, utilising the company's Microsoft Software Assurance Benefits. The engagements provided Holmes Group with on-site expertise on how to best deploy Skype for Business online and mobile device management (MDM) in Microsoft Azure.

Through delivering the Microsoft Planning Services engagements, the Lexel team quickly established credibility with Holmes Group, proving their depth of expertise in Microsoft solutions. After high level discussions, it was clear that Lexel was what Holmes Group was looking for in a partner and trusted advisor, to get their faltering SharePoint project back on track.

With the insight that Lexel brought to the table and the business benefits that were subsequently articulated, Holmes Group agreed to a significant change in direction. Instead of deploying SharePoint online *classic experience*, Holmes would now deploy SharePoint online *modern experience* with the SharePoint framework (SPfx).

“ One of the reasons we chose SharePoint and Teams is because it's a platform that's deeply integrated into Microsoft Office 365. ”



Sebastian Hermann ICT Project Lead at Holmes Group.

From the outset, Microsoft Teams was of great interest to Holmes Group. Deploying the SharePoint online modern experience would enable Holmes Group to easily integrate Teams. The solution would deliver to their users a far more visually impactful, user friendly and mobile solution than they would have had otherwise.

ICT Project Lead Hermann explains the vision, 'Microsoft SharePoint, we saw as the filing cabinet where you put information you want to find again. Teams was the space to collaborate really easily, have conversations, contributing across the business and around the world.'

Hermann reflects, 'We were trailing other collaboration tools like Slack, but what was exciting about Microsoft Teams, was the promise of integration into Office 365 and SharePoint.'

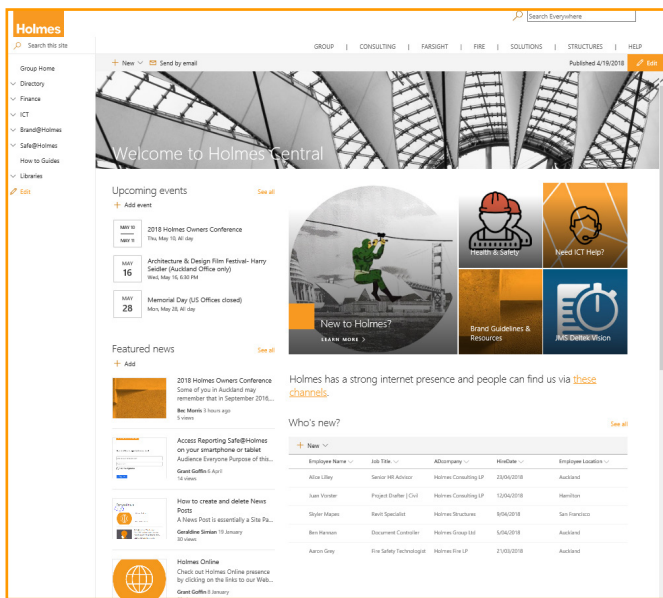
Lexel agreed to deliver Microsoft SharePoint online modern experience and integrate it with Microsoft teams; within the timeframe Holmes Group had originally been working towards. CIO, Sam Mulholland shares, 'To deliver in such a short period of time, Lexel did a really great job of picking up the pieces and turning it into something that worked really well.'

Results

Meeting the tight timeframes required by Holmes Group, 'Holmes Central' was launched in December 2017.

Incorporating Microsoft SharePoint online modern experience with Teams, Holmes Central delivered an exceptionally collaborative solution for the entire group. ICT Project Lead, Sebastian Hermann explains 'Holmes Central is the one place employees can now go to for literally anything they need, whether they're in New Zealand or on the other side of the world.'

Holmes Central had an immediate impact on the business. Holmes Farsight was able to build and house their extensive Quality Management System, which in turn became instrumental in them achieving ISO 17202 compliance; an important accreditation for the business.



"Holmes Central"

The company has also observed increases in productivity, marked by a steady rise of files being viewed and shared internally in both SharePoint and Teams, as staff explore and adopt the technology.

Through Microsoft SharePoint, Holmes Central presents two-way information in a visually impactful and user friendly manner from two sources:

- The employee directory is presented out of Active Directory and Microsoft SQL Server.
- Project information is presented from Holmes Group's SQL based ERP application.

Employees can now easily find useful information on projects across the entire Holmes Group, including team members and progress photos.

Adrian Sullivan, Data Integration expert from Lexel explains, 'We used Flow as the engine that would read data from SQL and write it back to SharePoint online. Using Flow, it's incredibly easy to pull information from any source and present it.'

The information presented in Holmes Central, was very much a two way street. Leveraging Flow and the existing PowerApps data gateway, Lexel enabled bi-directional data from SQL into SharePoint, delivering for Holmes Group real-time business intelligence.

“Lexel gave us peace of mind. Helped us achieve the outcomes that we wanted.”



SAM MULHOLLAND
Chief Information Officer
Holmes Group

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Sullivan explains that without Flow, building the kind of solution that Holmes Group wanted would only have been possible through extensive customisation, which would have resulted in costly delays.

With Lexel's help, Holmes Group did some minimal customisation around branding and system integration, but for the most part ICT Project Lead Sebastian Hermann tells us, 'SharePoint modern is straight out of the box.'

Hermann tells us, 'The hardest thing about the project was figuring out what content we had, and where to put it. Lexel did a great job at guiding us. There were so many things we didn't know, and most customers wouldn't know.'

CIO, Sam Mulholland adds, 'Lexel gave us peace of mind, and helped us achieve the outcomes that we wanted'.

'Microsoft has been a part of the journey at Holmes for the best part of a generation. That relationship has evolved over the years to a point where now, with Microsoft technology we have greater freedom and power to solve those problems and to make a difference to our entire business.'

